MEDIEVAL
SPAWN
AND
WITCHBLADE
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DIGITAL EDITION
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32 PAGES

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MEDIEVAL SPAWN AND WITCHBLADE

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THE TRUTH OF A TALE LIES IN THE TELLING. THE WORDS A MAN SPEAKS TO HIS SON, SO THAT HE IN TURN MAY PASS THEM ON TO HIS OWN...
...UNTIL THE TALE BECOMES THE TRUTH...
...AND THE TRUTH BECOMES THE LEGEND.
THIS TALE BEGINS WITH AN UNLIKELY BAND OF HEROES. A RAG-TAG BAND OF MEN AND WOMEN CARRYING WHAT WEAPONS THEY CAN LAY THEIR HANDS ON.
THEY DID NOT CHOOSE THIS FIGHT.
THEY FIGHT BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO CHOICE.

THERE. DO YOU SEE THEM?
UNCLE FINN... SEND YOUR LAD HOME. HE'S TOO YOUNG FOR THIS.
AYE, IT'S TRUE. HE'S TOO YOUNG.
AN' BROCKEN IS TOO OLD. AN' DALE IS TOO SICK. AN' I'M TOO BLIND.
YET HERE WE ARE.
STAY BEHIND ME, ARN. I'LL KEEP AN EYE ON YOU.
HERE THEY COME. LET'S PRAY OUR ARCHERS CAN EVEN THE ODDS.

STAY TOGETHER! WATCH YOUR COMRADES' BACKS!
SISK MAKITT!

YOU'RE BIG ENOUGH AND UGLY AS A DOG'S ARSE END, BUT I'VE FOUGHT BETTER THAN YOU.
SHUNK
I TOOK THIS SWORD FROM THE DEAD HAND OF THE LAST MAN I FACED IN COMBAT.
HISSSSSS

THOSE THINGS AREN'T EVEN HUMAN. OUR WEAPONS ARE USELESS AGAINST THEM.
WE HAVE TO RETREAT... REGROUP...
TOK
ARNI

FALL BACK TO THE TREES!
SWEET GOD, THOSE MONSTERS ARE GOING TO KILL US ALL!
WHAT WAS I THINKING? I'M NOT A FIGHTER.
I-I'M A COWARD. A WORTHLESS--
A MISERABLE TALE OF BLOODY DEFEAT AND SQUALID DEATH IS NOT WORTH THE TELLING.
BUT WHEN THE TALE HAS A TWIST...
WHA-?
...WHEN FORTUNES ARE REVERSED AGAINST ALL EXPECTATION...
...THEN THE TALE BECOMES TRUTH...

...AND THE TRUTH BECOMES LEGEND!

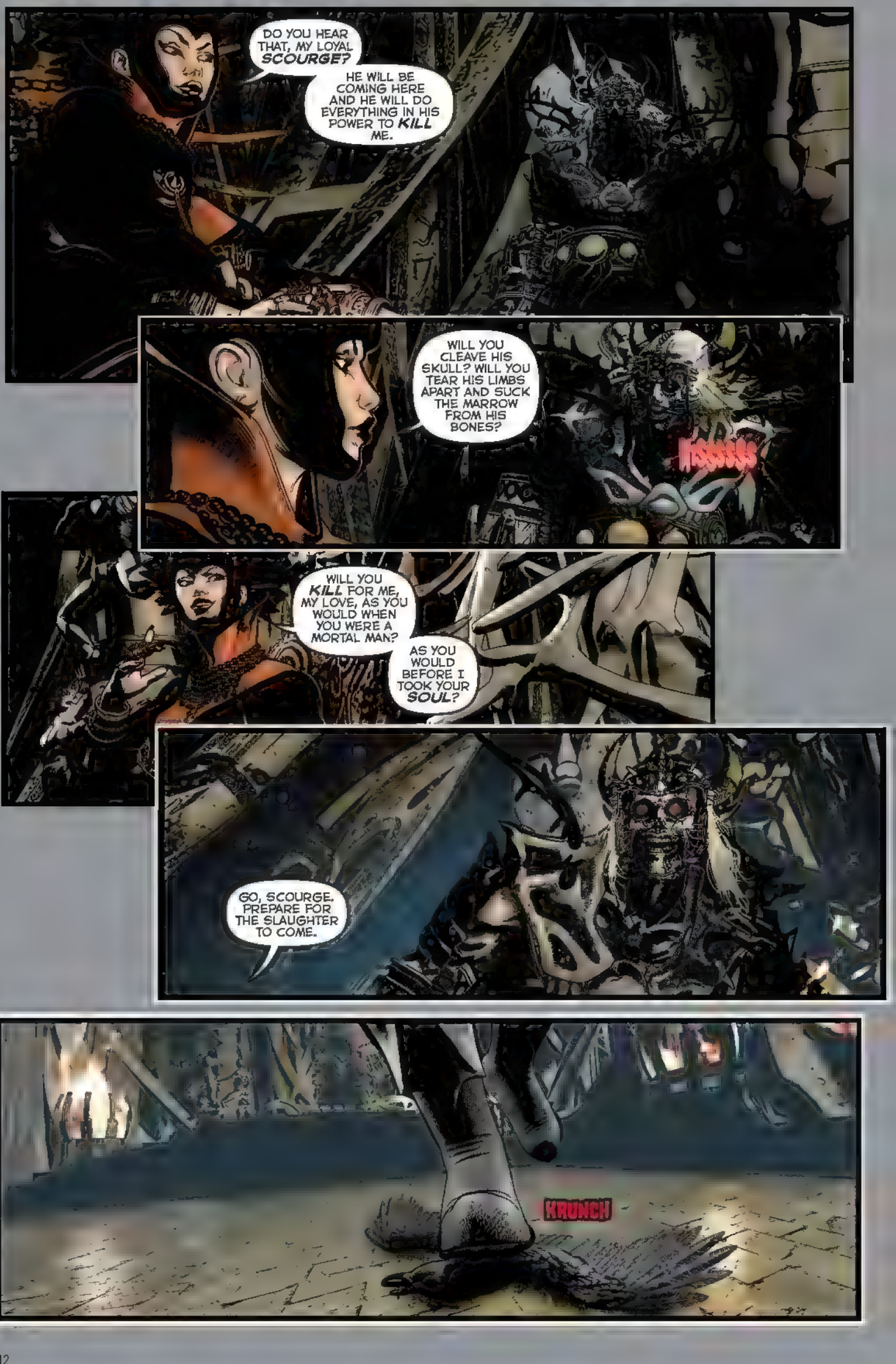
SIK MAKIT! ERAT!
SHIFF

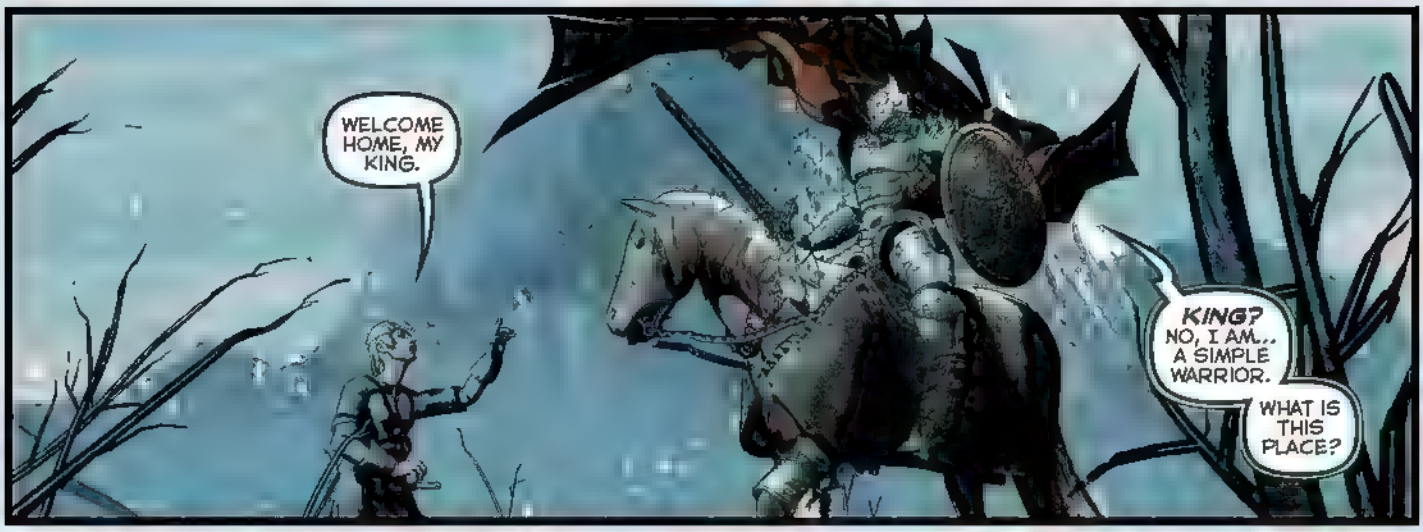
BEGONE!

THEY'RE LEAVING! IT'S A MIRACLE...
THE KING HAS RETURNED!

AS THE VICTORS COUNT THE COST OF THEIR TRIUMPH, AN UNSEEN OBSERVER TAKES FLIGHT.
ITS NATURAL INSTINCT IS TO REMAIN, TO FEED ON THE DEAD...
BUT IT IS FAITHFUL TO A HIGHER UNNATURAL INSTINCT.
THERE YOU ARE, MY BEAUTY.
WHAT HAVE YOU COME TO TELL ME, DEAR ONE?
KAWWW

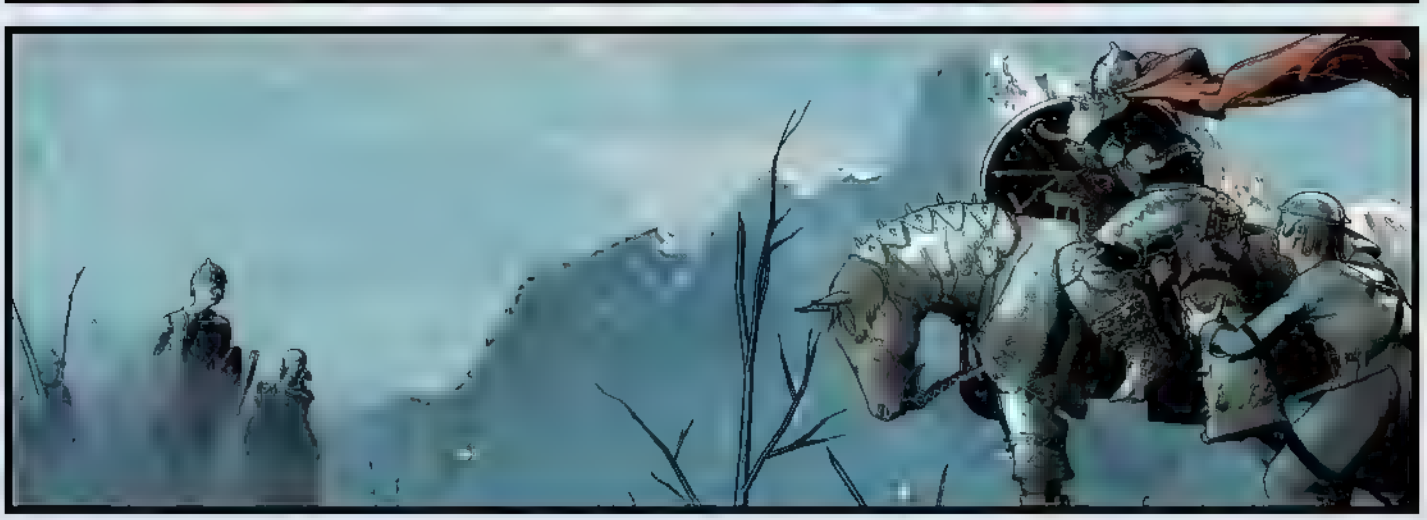
WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN WITH THESE PRETTY EYES?
YES. NOW I SEE.
SO...THEY HAVE FOUND A CHAMPION.


DO YOU HEAR THAT, MY LOYAL SCOURGE?
HE WILL BE COMING HERE AND HE WILL DO EVERYTHING IN HIS POWER TO KILL ME.
WILL YOU CLEAVE HIS SKULL? WILL YOU TEAR HIS LIMBS APART AND SUCK THE MARROW FROM HIS BONES?
RRRRR
WILL YOU KILL FOR ME, MY LOVE, AS YOU WOULD WHEN YOU WERE A MORTAL MAN?
AS YOU WOULD BEFORE I TOOK YOUR SOUL?
GO, SCOURGE. PREPARE FOR THE SLAUGHTER TO COME.
KRUNCH


WELCOME HOME, MY KING.
KING? NO, I AM... A SIMPLE WARRIOR.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?

NO, LORD. YOU ARE KING VALON. THAT IS YOUR SWORD, PEACE-BRINGER. EVERY CHILD KNOWS THE LEGEND OF IT.

THIS IS YOUR REALM. WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE.
MY NAME IS OWAIN. I WOULD BE YOUR SQUIRE, MY K.NG.
IF YOU'LL HAVE ME.



KING VALON... YES, PERHAPS. MY MEMORY IS CLOUDED.
YOU HAVE TRAVELLED ABROAD FOR MANY YEARS, MY LORD.
REMOVE YOUR HELMET, SO THAT YOUR PEOPLE MAY SEE YOU.
GOD PRESERVE US! WHAT DID THOSE BASTARDS DO TO YOU?
PERHAPS YOU'D BEST PUT IT BACK ON.

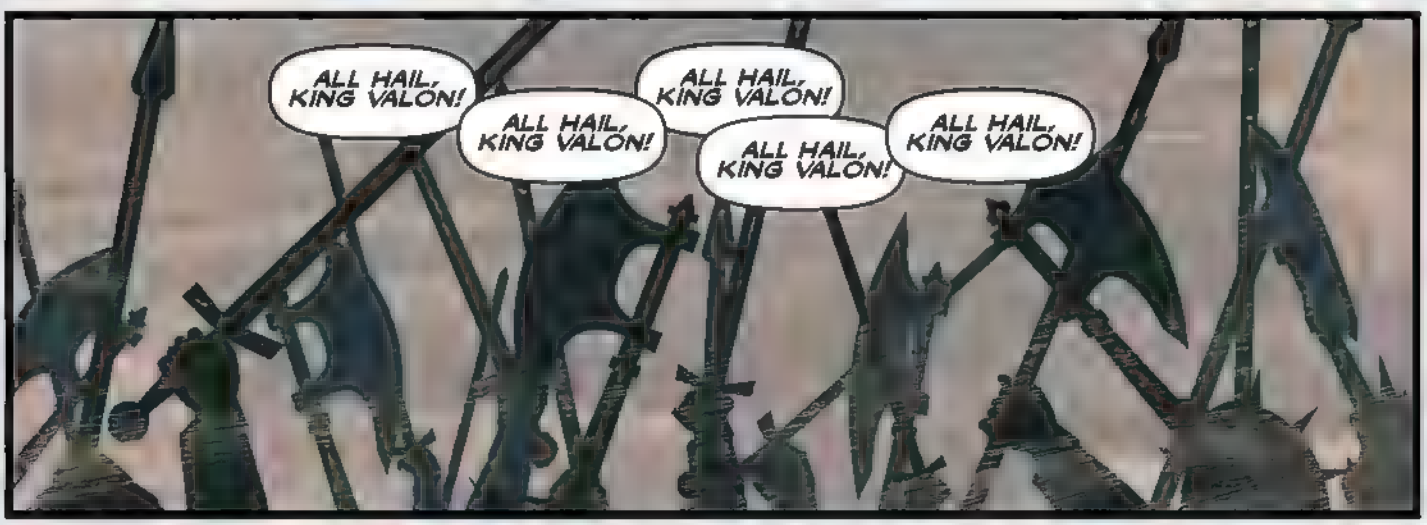
THEY ARE VICTORS BUT THERE IS NO SENSE OF TRIUMPH.

THEIR TREAD IS HEAVY WITH THE WEIGHT OF THEIR LOSSES.

ARN?
HE FOUGHT WELL AND DIED WITH HONOR.
BE PROUD OF OUR SON.

THE LORE-KEEPER HAS TOLD THE TALE A HUNDRED TIMES BUT TONIGHT THERE IS A NEW SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AMONG THOSE WHO LISTEN.
PRINCE VALON WAS A NOBLE THANE. THOUGH HIS PRINCEDOM WAS A MINOR ONE, HE HAD UNITED THE RIVAL TRIBES OF THIS REGION TO DEFEND US FROM THE BARBARIANS WHO WOULD TAKE OUR LANDS.
"WHILE THE KING COWERED IN HIS CASTLE, PREFERRING TO PAY RANSOM TO THE INVADERS TO BUY HIS OWN SAFETY, VALON LED HIS TROOPS TO MANY VICTORIES THROUGH HIS INSPIRED STRATEGIES AND VALOR."
"AT HIS SIDE WAS HIS CONSTANT FRIEND AND BATTLE COMPANION, THE NOBLE LEITH."

"AND SO THE KING WAS DEPOSED AND PRINCE VALON WAS CROWNED THE NEW HIGH KING IN HIS PLACE."


ALL HAIL, KING VALON!
ALL HAIL, KING VALON!
ALL HAIL, KING VALON!
ALL HAIL, KING VALON!
ALL HAIL, KING VALON!

I SWEAR UPON MY SWORD, PEACE-BRINGER, TO LEAD YOU WITH HONOR AND PROTECT THESE LANDS UNTIL MY DYING BREATH.
BUT HERE THE TALE TURNS DARK. THE TIME CAME FOR THE KING TO TAKE A WIFE. EACH THANE LORD HOPED THAT HE WOULD CHOOSE HIS BRIDE FROM AMONG THEIR TRIBE.
THE ARGUMENTS THAT FOLLOWED THREATENED THE NEW-MADE PEACE.
THE CHOICE HE MADE WOULD SURPRISE THEM ALL AND ULTIMATELY LEAD TO HIS DOOM.

"HER NAME WAS RIELLE. SOME SAID SHE CAME OUT OF THE SOUTH, FROM THE WILD GREEN SEA, WITH PEARLS IN HER HAIR."
"OTHERS THAT SHE CAME FROM THE NORTH, WHERE NIGHTS LAST HALF A YEAR AND STARS FALL FROM THE SKY LIKE HAIL."
"SOME SAY SHE SPRUNG STRAIGHT OUT OF VALON'S DREAMS, RIDING THROUGH THE CASTLE GATES AT DAWN ON A MOON WHITE STEED."
"THE KING KEPT PEACE WITH THE THANES BY NOT CHOOSING A BRIDE FROM ANY OF THEIR CLANS. BUT STILL THERE WAS TALK ABOUT THIS MYSTERIOUS NEW QUEEN."
"WHISPERS THAT SHE WOULD WANDER THROUGH THE WOODS ALONE AT NIGHT, DANCING TO MUSIC NO ONE COULD HEAR."
"THAT SHE WOVE STRANGE CHARMS INTO THE KING'S GARMENTS TO PROTECT HIM IN BATTLE, AND MAKE CERTAIN HE WOULD ALWAYS RETURN TO HER."
"THERE WERE OTHER RUMORS AS WELL."

"VALON AND HIS MEN WERE CALLED AWAY TO BATTLE. THE RAIDERS HAD RETURNED, ATTACKING VILLAGES ALONG THE NORTHERN COAST."
"THE QUEEN PLEADED WITH HIM NOT TO GO. SHE HAD A DREAM THAT HE WOULD NOT RETURN. PLEASE, SHE SAID, SEND LEITH TO LEAD THE MEN."
"BUT THE KING COULD NOT RESIST A BATTLE."
"WHEN LEITH RETURNED ALONE, SHE KNEW HER FEARS HAD COME TRUE."
"HE TOLD HOW THEY HAD RIDDEN INTO AN AMBUSH, HOW VALON AND ALL HIS MEN HAD BEEN SLAIN, SAVE HIM ALONE."
"THAT NIGHT, THE QUEEN DISMISSED HER COURTIERS AND GUARDS. THE GATES WERE SHUT, THE DRAWBRIDGE RAISED AND THE QUEEN WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN."

"NEXT FULL MOON, THE DARKNESS BEGAN..."
"NIGHTMARISH BEASTS CREPT OUT OF THE FOREST, STRANGE AND UNNATURAL, NOT BORN OF THIS WORLD."

"THEY CRAWLED OUT OF STREAMS AND WELLS."
"CROPS WITHERED AND TREES WENT BARE."

"MERCHANT SHIPS WOULD NO LONGER DROP ANCHOR AT THE PORTS. WHOLE VILLAGES FLED WEST TO FIND SAFETY."
"THE BLIGHT SPREAD LIKE A CANKER ACROSS THE LAND AND THE SHADOW ARMIES SPREAD WITH IT."
"COUNTLESS SOULS DIED AT THEIR HANDS. COUNTLESS MORE FROM STARVATION AND DISEASE."

AND SO WE EXIST, EKING OUT A LIVING AT THE BARREN EDGES OF THE REALM. BUT NOW THE DARKNESS RETURNS. WITH EVERY NEW MOON IT BLEEDS FURTHER INTO OUR LANDS.
THERE ARE THOSE THAT SAY KING VALON DIDN'T TRULY DIE. THAT HIS QUEEN'S SPELLS PROTECTED HIM. THEY SAY THAT IN OUR DARKEST DAYS HE WILL RETURN TO RECLAIM HIS KINGDOM.
BUT IT'S BEEN DARK SINCE BEFORE I WAS BORN. AND I HAVE WAITED A LONG, LONG TIME.
LEITH... YES. WE WERE LADS TOGETHER. WE SPARRED WITH WOODEN SWORDS AS SOON AS WE COULD STAND...
RIELLE... THE QUEEN. YES.
EYES LIKE THE SEA AT DAWN.
VALON. KING VALON. AND THIS WAS HIS KINGDOM.
THIS WAS MY KINGDOM...

I REMEMBER THIS LAND...
...BUT NOT LIKE THIS...
THIS WAS A GREEN AND PLEASANT LANDSCAPE TEEMING WITH LIFE
WHEN LAST I RODE THIS PATH, THERE WAS BIRDSONG IN THE AIR...
AND THE CRIES OF THE PEOPLE GREETING ME OVER...

I KNOW THIS VILLAGE.
"THEY OFFERED US HOSPITALITY. THEY WERE GOOD, LOYAL SUBJECTS."
IT WAS MY DUTY TO PROTECT THEM.
I HAVE FAILED YOU.
NO MORE! FROM THIS DAY I WILL KEEP MY PROMISE TO PROTECT THE CITIZENS OF THIS KINGDOM 'TIL MY DYING BREATH!

LOOK AT THIS SPEARHEAD... ANY MAN HERE BRAVE ENOUGH TO PICK IT UP?
IT'S A SMALL THING. DON'T WEIGH MUCH. SHARP ENOUGH, THOUGH. WHICH OF YOU MEN HAS THE COURAGE PICK IT UP AND CLAIM IT AS HIS OWN?
BECAUSE THIS BROKEN WEAPON BELONGED TO A LAD OF TWELVE. A LAD WHO STOOD AGAINST THE DARK THINGS THAT PREY ON ALL OF US.
WHO FOUGHT AND DIED SO THAT THE REST OF US COULD LIVE ANOTHER DAY.
IS ANY MAN HERE AS BRAVE AS THAT YOUNG LAD?
THOSE THAT KNOW ME, KNOW I HAVEN'T THE WIT TO TELL LIES. NO MIND FOR FANCIES OR FAIRY STORIES.
SO WHEN I TELL YOU THAT THE KING HAS RETURNED, IT'S BECAUSE I'VE SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES.
HE IS NO GHOST. NO PHANTOM. I HAVE TOUCHED HIM WITH MY OWN HAND.
SO WHO DARES PICK THIS UP?
WHICH MAN AMONG YOU WILL PICK UP HIS OWN SWORD? HIS AXE? HIS BILLHOOK? HIS SCYTHE? A BRANCH? A STONE?
WHO WILL STAND AND MARCH WITH OUR KING TO END THIS WAR OF SHADOWS FOREVER?

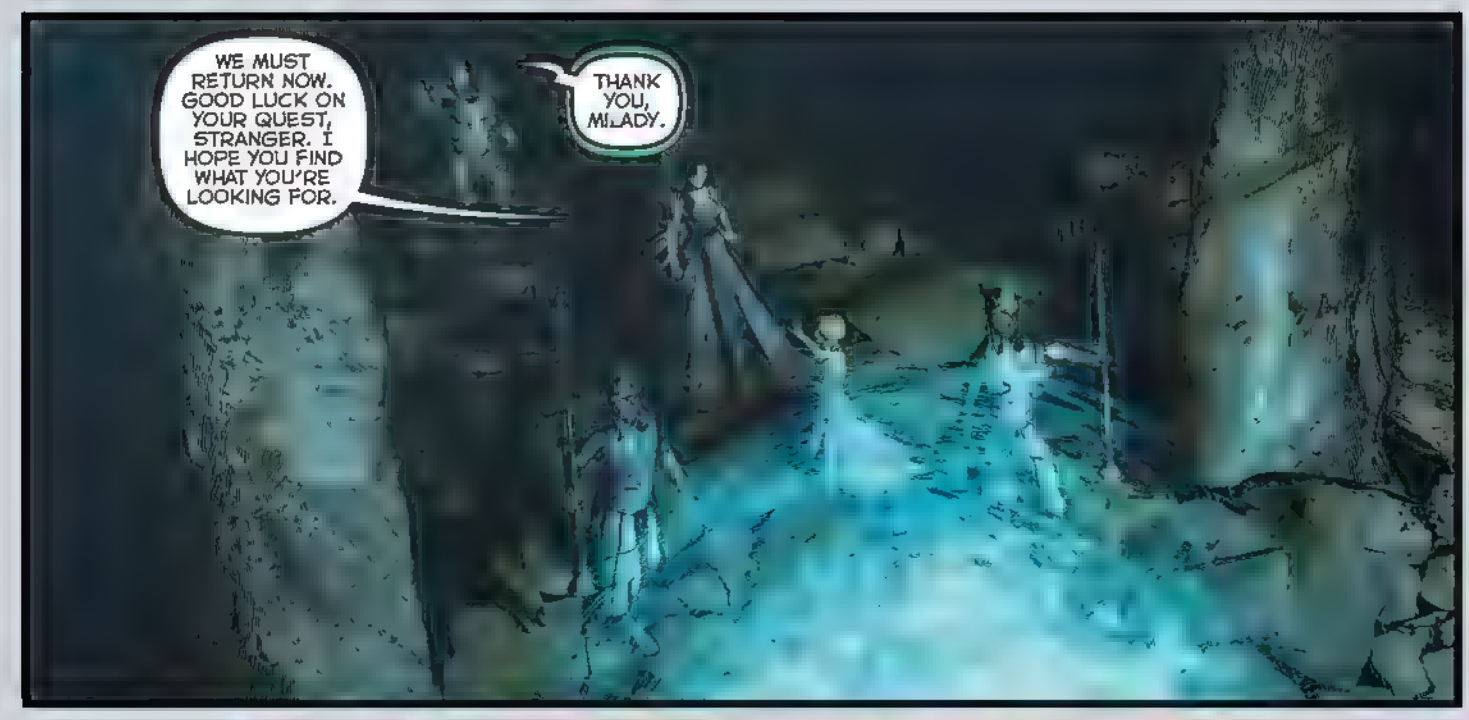
IF YOU WOULD MEASURE YOURSELF EQUAL TO A CHILD THEN STEP FORWARD NOW.
IF YOU WOULD FIGHT, IF YOU WOULD MARCH, IF YOU WOULD RISE TO DEFEND ALL YOU LOVE... STEP UP!
AND IF YOU WOULD NOT, THEN BE MARKED DOWN IN HISTORY FOREVER AS A COWARD.
LET YOUR NEIGHBORS TURN AWAY IN CONTEMPT WHEN YOU PASS AND YOUR CHILDREN BE SHAMED TO CALL YOU KIN.

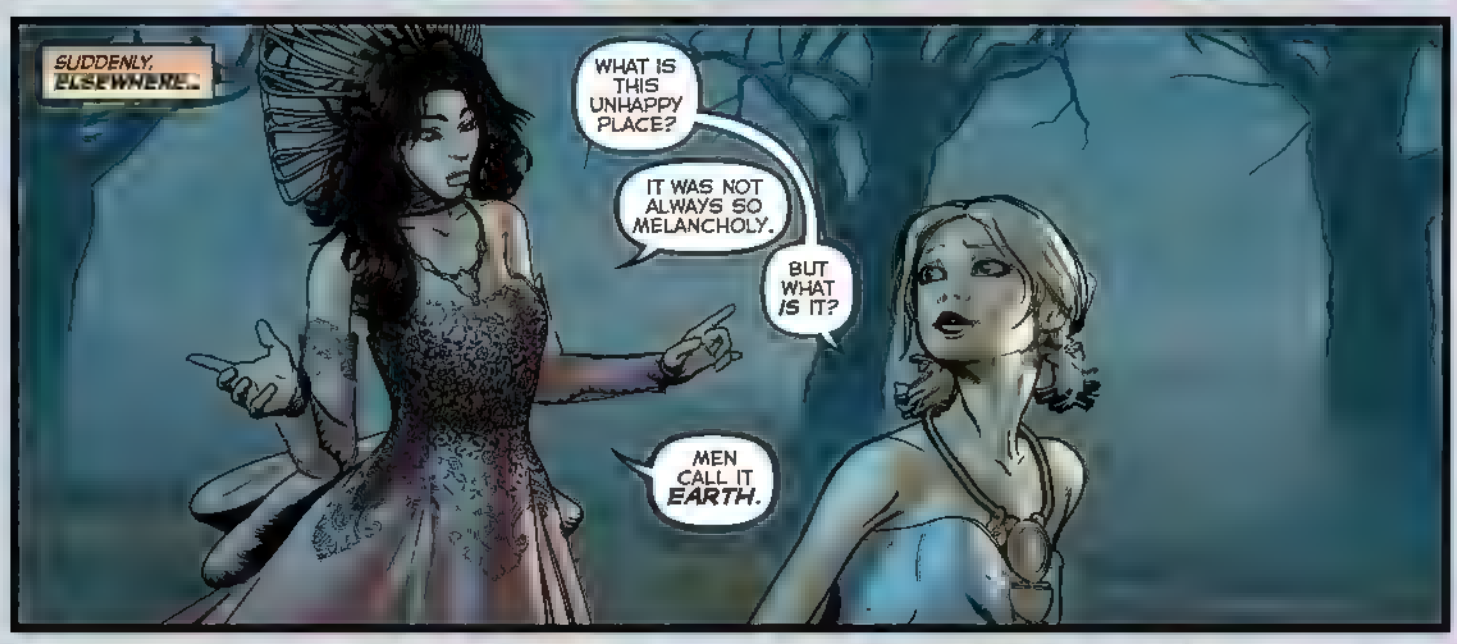
STEP UP NOW. FOLLOW YOUR KING AND KNOW YOUR NAME WILL RING IN GLORY FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS.

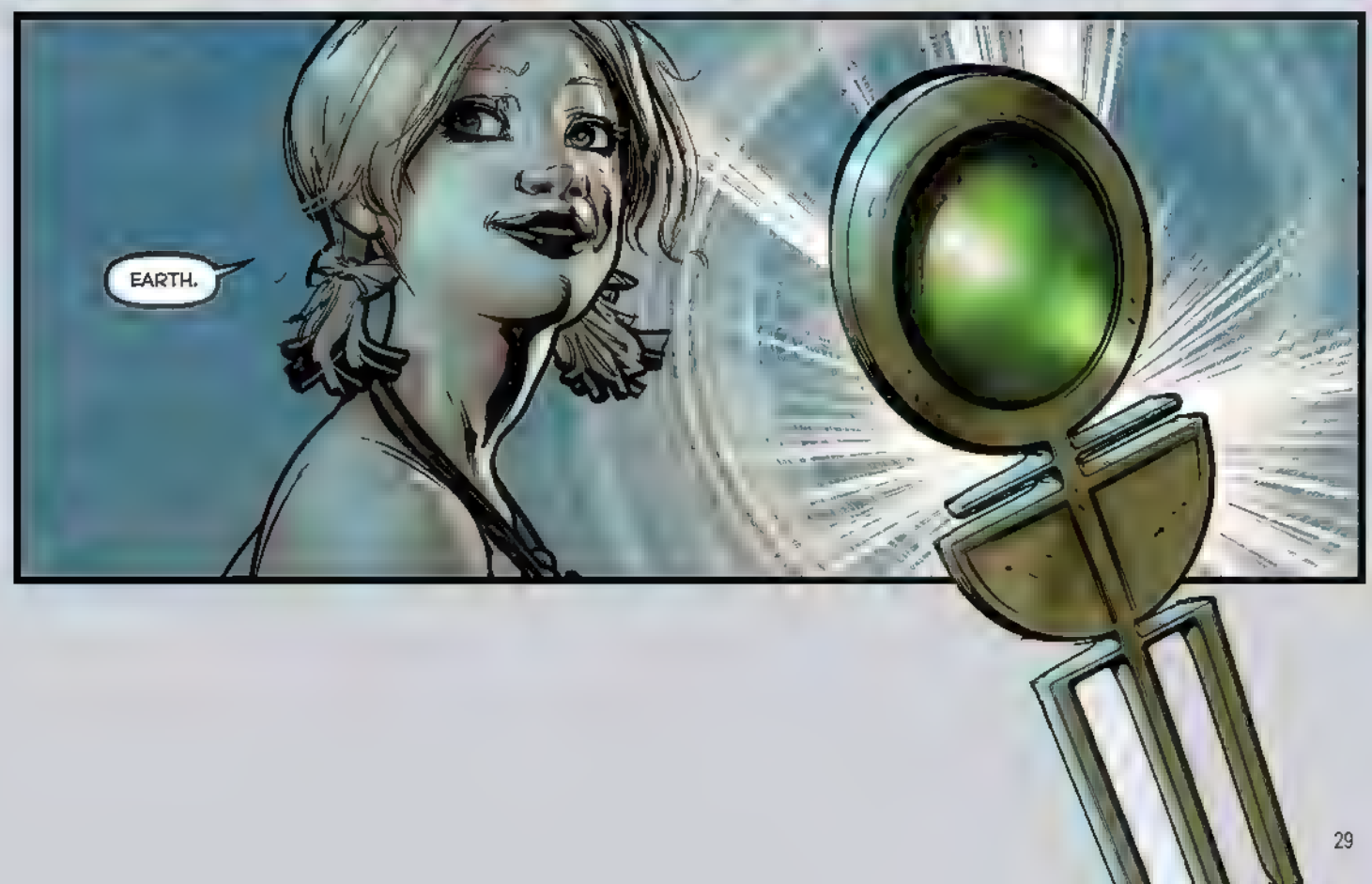
RIELLE...
RIELLE DANCED HERE
COME MY SWEET LOVE. COME TO ME.
WE MADE LOVE HERE
WHO'S THERE?

MORTAL MAN, I AM LADY GWYNNION OF THE HOUSE OF THE DANNAN...
OR NOT SO MORTAL...WHO ARE YOU?
THAT IS A QUESTION I AM TRYING TO ANSWER.
I HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOUR RACE. OUR COURT HAS ALWAYS HAD AN ACCORD WITH YOUR WORLD, AND LIVED IN HARMONY WITH IT. WE HAVE RESPECTED THAT ACCORD. BUT YOU HAVE NOT.
THERE IS A SHADOW CURSING YOUR LAND, AND THAT IS YOUR CONCERN.
BUT IT HAS BEGUN TO LEAK INTO OUR REALM. IT IS SPILLING INTO OUR WOODS AND RIVERS. THAT IS VERY MUCH MY CONCERN. KNOW THIS --
IF YOU DON'T END THIS PESTILENCE, WE WILL. AND OUR METHODS WILL NOT BE DISCRIMINATING.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME, KNIGHT-AT-ARMS?
YES, MILADY. I UNDERSTAND.
GOOD. I DON'T ENVY -- WHERE'S THAT GIRL?
KILDARE!

YOU PROMISED TO BEHAVE! IS THAT HOW A PRINCESS ACTS?
SORRY. BUT THE TREES LOOKED SO SAD.
THAT IS NOT YOUR CONCERN.
GREETINGS, SIR KNIGHT.


WE MUST RETURN NOW. GOOD LUCK ON YOUR QUEST, STRANGER. I HOPE YOU FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.
THANK YOU, MILADY.


SUDDENLY, ELSEWHERE...
WHAT IS THIS UNHAPPY PLACE?
IT WAS NOT ALWAYS SO MELANCHOLY.
BUT WHAT IS IT?
MEN CALL IT EARTH.


EARTH.

GREETINGS MY KING! I HAVE NEWS –
I AM NO KING.
I BEG TO DIFFER, MY LORD...
A KING HAS A THRONE. A CROWN. A REALM. I HOLD NONE OF THOSE THINGS.
BUT, CROWN OR NO, I WILL FIGHT FOR YOU. I WILL BRING THIS DARKNESS TO AN END.
YES, MILORD. SO IT IS FORETOLD.
NOTHING IS FORETOLD...
BUT AT LEAST I HAVE A SQUIRE. LET THAT BE A START, YOUNG...
OWAIN. MY NAME IS OWAIN.
OWAIN.
AND YOU HAVE MUCH MORE THAN A SQUIRE, MY LIEGE. COME SEE...

YOU HAVE AN ARMY!
TO BE CONTINUED...

A land besieged by Dark Forces. When all hope is lost, a long-dead king returns. But is he a savior or a destroyer...?

SON OF ULTRON